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Oral History Collection

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Roscoe, Mary Ellen

January 16, 1967

Interviewed by Rich Rauberg and Russ Farnsworth

RF: The following discussion occurred on January 16, 1967 in the Community Building at Westcliffe, Colorado. Present were Rich Rauberg and Russ Farnsworth from Florence and the subject of the interview was Mrs. Mary Ellen Roscoe of Westcliffe.

January 15, 1967 and we're in Westcliffe in the Community Building. With us today, we have Mrs. Mary Ellen Roscoe. Now if you will, first of all, you go by Ellen, right?

MR: No.

RF: Mary Ellen, ok. Would you, you have these two photographs which we will be talking in the future. Would you give us any information you might have about those two photographs?

MR: This is the Palace Saloon, it's in Querida and I think Mr. Cuthness and Mr. Ed Levitz, Ralph Huffington and my grandfather, George Weiman are in this picture.

RF: Ok, where was this building located in relation to the old Bassick Mine?

MR: Well, this is right across from the Bassick Mine. This is right on the Main St. There were seven saloons in Querida at one time.

RF: Now, is this south or is this west of the mine?

MR: This would be west of the mine.

RF: Ok, good. Now how about that other picture that you have there?

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MR: Well, this is a ball game played in Querida sometime in the 1800's and it would be east of Querida up on the flat as you come into Querida.

RF: Do you know any of those individuals that were possibly in that group, on that baseball team?

MR: Uh, Mr. Joe Fisher told me that he thought one of these was Mr. Barnley.

RF: Ok, now I understand you work with [unintelligible]

MR: That's right. I take care of them [unintelligible] in the summertime when Mrs. Curtis is not available. Mr. and Mrs. Curtis is taking care of them, usually for quite a few years. I've taken care of it for three years.

RF: Now, I'd like you to dig back in your memory. This project mainly concerns information as far back as we can get on people you knew, names you might recall, any particular mining incidents or anything like this, and the gentlemen involved if you happen your parents talking about, or people coming into the area, anything as far back as you can remember about the people and the miners and the ranchers and the railroad men. Just start thinking back and talking out loud so we can get this on tape.

MR: You know, this is hard for me to do because I never kept anything down. I know a lot of the history but could never get too much of it down. Dr. Sperry was a doctor in Querida in those days. See, the county seat was in Rosita, no, in Ula first, and then Rosita, then Silver Cliff, now Westcliffe.

RF: I see. And he was a physician?

MR: He was a physician in Querida.

RF: Do you know anything about his background, where he came from or what-

MR: No, I sure don't. I just know he was just a [unintelligible] iet doctor and he [unintelligible] took care of all the people there and-

RF: How long did he leave or did he die here?

MR: Oh, that was many years before I can even remember.

[unintelligible]

MR: No, I sure don't. But he was the doctor when I was born.

RF: Ok, well, what did your parents do?

MR: My grandfather came from Central City in early days to Rosita, about 1880, something like that, and he mined. He was a miner. My mother was born in Rosita in 1881.

RF: And what was her last name?

MR: White.

RF: Mrs. White. Which mine did he work in?

MR: Well, he worked in those mines at Rosita, the Humboldt and Rose for a while, and then he moved to Querida and took up a ranch and he worked in the Bassick mine. He took up lots of mining claims and he was, he could direct people to these places where the veins run and he used to just go and tell them when they were mining where to be. He was just like a geologist. He worked in the mines quite a while and we used to think it was just grandpa. We didn't pay much attention to him and now since I see all this, I wish I'd have paid more attention to my grandfather.

RF: Did he witch for water?

MR: Yes.

RF: And was he good at it?

MR: Yes. He'd take that forked stick and walk with it in his hands and where the water was, it turned and yes, he witched a lot of lands.

RF: How many times did he miss out of the times he did? Would you have any idea?

MR: I have no idea of that.

RF: Interesting. Would he do this to find a vein of ore?

MR: No, I think he studied rocks and the way they run in the ground.

RF: I would think he would have to.

MR: Uh huh, yeah. I know people he witched for them. He could just about find these gold [unintelligible] and all that, draped in many a little and then he'd study these things and the ore and he could just about tell them where the ore was.

RF: Very interesting. You say, for a while, he lived in town and then he bought a ranch right around there, your grandparents did?

MR: My grandparents took up the ranch out there at Querida.

RF: At Querida.

MR: Uh huh, in the early, early days. I don't know just, oh, you could go to the courthouse and get that but I never have.

RF: It's right on Querida though. Which direction, do you recall?

MR: Well, it would be north of Querida.

RF: North, ok. You remember anything in particular about the old Bassick mine, that was unusual or just give us your recollections, what you've heard tell about it.

MR: Well, it was an awful big payroll, the Bassick at one time. They took out a lot in gold and it was 1800' deep and the tunnels run all out and under it. There's 1700' of water in it.

RF: 1700' of water.

MR: 1800' deep and 1700' of water in it.

RF: That's now.

MR: Uh huh. That old shaft is full of water.

RF: I'll be darned. What a well! Is that why the [unintelligible] down the Hardscrabble?

MR: Well, it isn't going to run out or anything. Just amazing. Yeah, I imagine it would go down that Johnson's Gulch. I imagine that's the stream from it, goes right down the, to the Arkansas River.

RF: Now, you have Dr. Sperry. You remember any other physicians that were in the area or perhaps that might have come through, something of that nature?

MR: No, they had a paper there one time, and they had a paper in Rosita and there was five papers in Silver Cliff at one time, two dailies and three weeklies.

RF: Is that right?

MR: There was 10,000 people in Silver Cliff and almost could have the capitol, but too few votes.

RF: Now, is there any way that we might get pictures of some of these old papers? Are there any copies left that you are aware of?

MR: Mm hmm, yes, in the museum there is several papers in there.

RF: Good, that's always good information. One in Querida and five in Silver Cliff.

MR: We have an old printing press and the museum that printed the Independence in Rosita in the old days and then taken to Silver Cliff and then to Westcliffe, and then it gets taken down here to the Observer. Belongs to Joe Pradens. This is the man who kind of-

RF: Get your camera, Rich, and photograph it. This is the old printer, you say. {they seem to be walking around and it's difficult to hear the conversation}. [unintelligible] and he has it in the museum in Silver Cliff.

RF: I see. Give me that what we got on tape so I got that. I was-

MR: You may have to take some more. [lots of background noises] ran a dry goods store in Silver Cliff.

RF: Phillips.

MR: George Phillips and in his store, he had the post office. There was a post office and bank, hotels, opera house.

RF: Is any of this building left?

MR: No.

RF: But it moved out or it burned down or what?

MR: It was moved out, I think. The McClure Hotel in Canon City was one hotel that was in Silver Cliff. The Westcliffe Hotel was moved down from Silver Cliff.

RF: Did I understand you to say they moved that building clear from Silver Cliff to Canon City?

MR: Oh, well, I think they tore it down. I think they; it was a brick building I believe and I think they tore it down.

RF: There was an awful lot of buildings removed in Silver Cliff, tear them down and rebuild them down on farms and different places.

MR: All of them's moved. Now, this hotel in Westcliffe was moved down by a winch.

RF: That's the hotel here?

MR: Yes, that's right, and Macy's Hall was moved from Westcliffe. It's right directly across from the museum. There's a lot of-

RF: Now, you said the Lakeson building-

MR: That's here.

RF: That's here, Silver Cliff. Ok.

MR: The Mason Lodge still goes by Silver Cliff.

RF: Mr. Schultz was telling us about moving some of those buildings from Silver Cliff over-

MR: Yes, I imagine he can remember it.

RF: He can. It's quite a job.

MR: Yes.

UI: We'll have to get him here again and have him come-

MR: Both the Catholic church and the Episcopalian church was moved from Silver Cliff down here too. Those two churches was right in town.

RF: The Catholic and the Episcopalian.

UI: The Catholic started in Rosita, he didn't we were all over the country.

RF: Moving churches-

[unintelligible, overlapping voices]

MR: The Episcopalian church was in Rosita first, moved to Silver Cliff and then moved to Westcliffe.

RF: Now did they move the building actually from Rosita?

MR: Yes.

RF: Now the Episcopalian and the Catholic both started in Rosita, moved to Silver Cliff and then here.

MR: Uh huh.

RF: I've heard of the preacher moving but he wanted to take his building with him. (laughing)

UI: Up in the museum, we have a picture of the Catholic church when they first moved it down here. They moved it way out here on the flats. Then they thought Westcliffe, see there was no Westcliffe when Silver Cliff was big. It was built up after. The railroad came in here to Westcliffe and that's when

Westcliffe. So, they thought that this would be the bigger town and they moved the Catholic church way out there on the flat. They thought the [unintelligible] would reach way out there. Well, it didn't reach that far so they moved it back here at the town.

RF: Do you recall back in the early days the activities of the various denominations and the relative strengths say, was it a big Lutheran congregation or the Episcopalians a big group or the Catholic or whatever it might be?

MR: Well, I think at first in Silver Cliff in all the history I read, the Episcopalians was really the main church at that time.

RF: Episcopalians, ok.

MR: And then the Lutheran church. The Colony came in, and even [unintelligible] at the Colony where the Colony at the end of the town up there, the German Colony. South.

RF: South of here., o

MR: And they built the first Lutheran church that was built in the state of Colorado. I have the picture.
[unintelligible]

RF: You have the picture.

MR: I have the picture in the museum [unintelligible] I think the big, or you could get that too, I guess.

RF: Yeah, this is better living up here.

MR: Yeah.

RF: They know what they're talking about. [unintelligible] ok, that's good. So, the first Lutheran church down there. The Episcopalian was over in here. What other groups were present?

MR: You know, there was a little church that, I think there were a few Mormons in here. [unintelligible] and he told me that some religious [unintelligible] that was in Silver Cliff in the early days that I never knew about.

RF: Like-

[unintelligible]

MR: Mr. Haskell was a foreman on the Geiser mine, mine in Silver Cliff. They found farm silver there in the early days, a very high-grade silver and Mr. Haskell was the foreman and J.B. Gould put a [unintelligible] in the mine, and his grandson was here from Denver last summer and drew a lot of pictures. And [unintelligible] that he ever had. [unintelligible] and those pictures was his parents.

RF: And his grandson is in Denver, right?

MR: Mm hmm. His name's Edward Jenking.

RF: J.B. Gould put up the money for that mine, wasn't the famous Jay Gould.

MR: It was.

RF: It was?

MR: I never knew [unintelligible] until this man told me that's the man, J.B. Gould, I even found a piece of ore in one of the cases up there with his name on it. Seems I read in the papers another name-

RF: Now you had a sample of the work-

MR: I do.

UI: Do you want the door open.

RF: Oh, you might open it a crack, I think, how about you, are you comfortable?

UI: That would be fine.

MR: I'll bet you are pretty warm.

RF: Did the Carnegies ever have anything to do up in this area? To your recollection?

MR: Not to my recollection. Of course, you see, this history was, I was born, this history that I know from my folks and my grandparents and all them. Silver Cliff was not much of a town when I was a girl.

RF: What did your parents do? We've got what your grandparents did.

MR: Well, they lived in Querida on the homestead and farmed, had cattle, I had always been out there yet myself.

RF: Do you?

MR: Well, I owned about 600 acres of land out there.

RF: That's a pretty valley. You come in from the east side there.

MR: It's very pretty there on our place in the fall when the aspens turn yellow. It's really pretty.

RF: Very pretty stretch.

RR: Ok, now let's see. Are you through with that particular line, Rich, because I'd like to pursue another one here for a minute.

RF: Go right ahead.

RR: Do you know anything about the Medano country?

MR: Medano? No, I s[unintelligible] snumberinure don't know much about it.

RF: Have you ever met or know anything about Eulace Hirard?

MR: No. They have a man we think that came from over in there, Mr.-

RF: It turns [unintelligible]

UI: Mr. who?

MR: Mr. Garrison in Silver Cliff might know. Mrs. Edith Starr in the store and they raised cattle and lived-and they would know about the Medano.

RF: And this is his daughter? Mr. Garrison?

MR: Garrison. He works here in the store.

UI: He lives here over the old pool hall.

MR: It's right down here [unintelligible]

RF: Can you give now some information on the main buildings in Querida and Rosita and perhaps what they had been earlier but not used, or used for the same thing later, some of the old buildings that are still standing?

MR: Well, there isn't much in any of those places left now.

RF: I do recall seeing one that they made into a post office for the movie, I believe.

MR: Yes, but it, there's part of that still standing there. I think that used to be an old saloon-

UI: No, in that movie, too.

RF: Oh, are you?

UI: Yes, it just looks like a house.

RF: Uh huh.

UI: It was a feed store.

RF: Is this the one that's been moved down here since that's over-

MR: No, this is Clarence [unintelligible] parents lived-

UI: They've been in a different valley, it's gone now.

MR: It is?

UI: Oh yes. [unintelligible] by the timber line there is a very good sketch of that old house that was there.

MR: One of the Putman's Halls, it's still-

UI: It's still there, partly used. There's not much of the Putman's Hall there.

RF: Putman's Hall?

MR: Mm hmm.

RF: What's the background on this?

MR: Well, I think it was an old saloon in the early days. And the post office was right there close to that. It's still standing there, what's left of it, it's still there where Mrs. Humphries had the post office.

RF: And this is right there at Putman Hall. Was this a home or, a little house or what?

MR: Just a little plank house. [unintelligible] Putman Hall was where we had a dance that was to help this library, to help the beginnings of it.

RF: Oh, is that right?

MR: Mm hmm [unintelligible] I went to the dance and all of us had plays, played music, those who could. It was just a, and the people furnished lunches and everything from the neighborhood. Always came here for lunch.

RF: Because the beginning monies-

MR: That was part of it, yes. The teachers gave two plays, let's see, that would be three years, and the first year, we didn't. We used the money I guess for the county. But the second time, why, these two plays went and the money from the Putnam dance, I think we got around 70 some odd dollars from it. Clayton's funny, couldn't dance, but it was crowded there and everybody had a good time.

RF: What year approximately?

MR: I'd say it was about, it must have been either '30 or '31.

RF: OK.

MR: Because we had the plan of the library from the schoolhouse, it was about '28 and '29, '31.

UI: I think the little jailhouse is still in Rosita. It's still a jailhouse. They had school in it in winter here, got so you couldn't heat it and all, and they had school in that little stone house, where you have a jail.

RF: The reason I'm asking about this is we want to get pictures of these buildings or the remains of them.

MR: And the schoolhouse in Querida is still there.

RF: It's the first time I knew that for our kids, when they said they were going to jail when they meant school, they could really say they were going to jail and mean school. (laughing) Do you recall there was a little house of rough outer timbers right across from the Bassick mine on the crest across the road-

MR: That was the pass-

UI: You mean that red eye [unintelligible]-

RF: No, this one is, still got the windows and stuff, cause some people in Florence just purchased it.

MR: Oh, that's the-

RF: Rob Morris was round here in those days-

MR: Yeah, that's where Mr. and Mrs. Palsick for quite a number of years and before that, there was, I can't remember that man's name that lived down there in the early early days in Florence.

UI: That little house was just below that one you're talking about.

MR: Is Mrs. [unintelligible], her name was Green the time she owned that house in the early days.

RF: Kind of north of them down towards the main tiling?

MR: Uh huh. North, yeah, that was [unintelligible]'s house. That's where her husband I think in that house.

RF: Green.

MR: She was Green at that time.

RF: Which Mrs. Vahldick is this now?

UI: Eleanor.

MR: It's Mrs. [unintelligible] Walt.

UI: One of her grandchildren.

MR: Her daughter was Mrs. Blunt.

RF: That's her daughter?

MR: Mm hmm.

[noise in the background]

MR: I don't believe that's Stanley Blunt's wife but it's, I think his brother was married to Jo.

RF: I see.

UI: I know Jo Blunt.

MR: Jo, they called this woman Jo, and-

UI: She was a James. The James's lived in Rosita in Hungry Gulch. They had a big house.

MR: She come out of Rosita [unintelligible] and that's what they called Hungry Gulch.

RF: You know how it got its name?

MR: Some of the prospectors going hungry (laughing)

RF: That's what I was thinking, so that's why I asked. You recall any particular fires that happened in Querida or Rosita?

MR: You know what you ought to do? You ought to get hold of [unintelligible] a lot of this [unintelligible] in Querida-

[unintelligible]

RF: Silver Cliff-

MR: They had some pretty bad fires in Silver Cliff. Of course, we had a great fire team [unintelligible] in Silver Cliff, we have some trophies why wouldn't they claim to be the fastest-

UI: They have pictures of them.

MR: A lot of pictures of the fires [unintelligible] at the house that his father and four other people came by and camped overnight and was planning on mining there. It was where the Bassick is now. But they got in the coal. Now they packed up and moved on to different places.

RF: Is that right? This was Oscar-

MR: Pence, yes. He's the lonesome in hospital.

RF: Oh yes, he had a-

UI: Well, trying, if we can't get him, we'll try and get his sister.

RF: That's kind of an expensive item that they had then on that-

MR: His mother was having to leave mining. They were lots of trouble and even when they'd go out and stake these claims, and then, go away, and somebody's jump them and they had. They had one real bad

killing in Rosita at one time. A fellow left his claim and he come back, somebody had staked it, they got into it and one fellow shot the other one.

RF: Do you recall the names?

MR: No, I sure don't. But now the county calendar, I think that would be your [unintelligible] very active in the mining business and all, and he can, he could tell you a lot more about the mining and all these names and all. He remembers it better than I do. If I just had on my history down as it should be and all I could write several books but you know I never kept it down, kept it straight (laughing)

RF: Who does?

MR: Of course, after I worked in the union for a while, well, your know I'd get so I could really, look up, say, are you telling the truth, and I'd tell them there was five newspapers, two dailies and three weeklies, in Silver Cliff. But the papers are the main-

RF: Run a little paper [unintelligible]

MR: No, I have a register, Silver Cliff register, that gives the names of all the businesses, and the streets and all that, and I have a, then I can go read, you know, at the courthouse of the town. You'd be surprised at the streets and the, what was in Silver Cliff.

RF: Another many many miles from fire hydrants, uh water lines, but-

UI: Yeah, how did the rain down here in Westcliffe to have the, I haven't seen the picture that was up in the Denver museum for years. I've heard saying that they finally found it and she has the picture, the frame, but I told her the picture is what we need to get, and it's Silver Cliff and it's rained kind of on the houses and all very clear. I just saw it this morning. I told her some day, we'd probably come and get a picture of it.

RF: How large is it?

UI: I'd say – that long and about that high (gesturing)-

MR: Mountain range but-

UI: Another picture in the mountains of a freight team a leaving and to go to Canon City. That's the way they hauled their supplies, they had high peaks, six or eight horses on it and they drive in front of museum building, the building you see. Mr. Farmer from California, his grandfather was Mr. Fox and he had a store, right next to the museum and that was where the telephone came, the first telephone that came into Custer County was up by the Kennell house, right in Silver Cliff and that was, they had to go around her telephone-

RF: About when was this?

MR: Well, that building was put up in 1879.

RF: That's what I, which direction now?

MR: Oak Creek.

Recording ends abruptly.